

A message from the President, March 2017

Welcome to Spring! As I write this, I must say, "Where has the winter gone?". It seems only yesterday I was wishing you a joyous holiday season.

Life at OTF has been very busy over the last few months. We were pleased to have the Minister of Education at our Winter Board of Governors' Meeting. We hosted a Curriculum Forum Retreat focused on Truth and Reconciliation at Kempenfelt Bay. As well, our inaugural conference on teacher education attended by teacher education liaison committees from the province's Faculties of Education was very successful. And meetings with the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan have kept us busy.

On March 2, 2017, I presented at the meeting of the Governing Council of the College of Teachers. Speaking on behalf of the Affiliate presidents and the teachers of Ontario, I raised concerns about proposed Bylaw amendments under consideration by the Council which threatened to diminish fairness to teachers. As you know, the Protecting Students Act came into force on December 5, 2016. The Act made some significant changes to the transparency of discipline cases at the College of Teachers. Presently, the College's Bylaws require the removal of a teacher reprimand from the public register after three years have passed. Discipline Committees, however, have discretion to require that some decisions remain public for a longer period to address more serious transgressions.

The motion being considered by the Council, however, would have required that all decisions, and terms, conditions and limitations (TCLs) applying to teachers who were reprimanded remain public indefinitely. This was not recommended by Justice LeSage nor was it supported by the Government when the College asked it to modify the legislation in this way.

I argued that, should the Bylaw amendment pass and a notation permanently exist on the College's public register for a teacher, it could forever tarnish that teacher's reputation for what may have been a minor offence. It would also contradict the rehabilitative nature of discipline itself.

Councillors clearly heard our concerns and defeated those proposed amendments. I am pleased that the councillors agreed with OTF and the Affiliates that the public interest must be balanced with due process and fairness to teachers.